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# AMERICANIZATION

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“The Medium of Common Thought Is a Common Language”

THE CONGREGATIONAL HOME MISSIONARY SOCIETY

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# AMERICANIZATION

EZEKIEL 47:22. "For an inheritance unto you, and to the strangers that sojourn among you, which shall beget children among you: and they shall be unto you as born in the country among the children of Israel."

**T**HIS is an aftermath of this awful war. There is every reason to believe that we are going to make a more superb failure in the essay than we did with Reconstruction after the Civil War. There is a hurry and hysteria in the movement that augurs more evil than hyphenated Americanism. The dogmatism of its devotees is directly proportioned to their ignorance of its purpose or methods of accomplishment. Minute men by the million are getting down their bell-muzzled blunderbusses (not rifles) and loading them up with shingle nails and salt and are starting out to shoot up the alien crowd. Bullying and baiting the ignorant foreigners is going to be great fun for us loyal Americans. In place of sporadic alien apathy or antipathy toward Americans, we are going to have solid, serious American antagonism toward all aliens. I am not mad, most noble readers, but I am speaking words of soberness and truth. I am not saying there is no need for Americanization. God forbid! So great is the need that my soul cries out against the movement being bungled and baffled.

I am American born, bearing a lineage and unchanged name from one who was on the passenger list of the Mayflower, whose mooring in the port of Plymouth three hundred years ago we are in preparation of celebrating. Many of you have obtained this Pilgrim freedom with a great price, but I was Pilgrim born. Also with ancestors in the War for Independence, a father, a volunteer in the Civil War who gave his life thereby, **and an** enlisted son in this

war, I claim I belong to loyal American stock and sentiment, but this is no proof whatever that I am one hundred per cent American.

But because of a long, large and loyal love for America, I raise a protest against this mechanical movement called Americanism, as in many, if not most parts, it savors of Prussianism, simply changing the spelling and pronunciation but retaining the scheme and the spirit.

Now do not mistake me, I pray.

The United States sorely needs a stronger national unity of the right sort. "United we stand but divided we fall," not only in war but in the piping times of peace. The present difficulty and danger is that we will all be sprinting for the goal of Americanism without knowing what it is or where it is. We are assuming the authority of master workmen in Americanization without serving the slightest term of apprenticeship or even the preparation of a correspondence course.

Allow me to give you two illustrations of the modern status of the Americanization movement. The first is an excerpt from the excellent and recent inaugural address of Governor Holcomb of Connecticut, a man whose personal acquaintance I prize and of his official position and record I am justly proud:

"The prosecution of this war has . . . revealed among us an element alien not only in birth but in speech and sentiment. At the moment when the United States most needed a united, coherent people . . . we discovered unassimilated groups of individuals possessing neither American citizenship nor familiarity with



American aims. The existence of these groups . . . served to enlarge the draftquotas . . . and unjustly burdened the citizen class of registrants because a very large percentage of the alien class of registrants claimed exemption on the ground of alienage. This emphasized the unwisdom of our neglect in the past to educate and absorb the immigrant into our body politic. That he is capable of such absorption is obvious to anyone who glances over the casualty list and notes the foreign extraction of many of our finest citizen soldiers. Industrially this unabsorbed alien class constitutes a menace. Radical agitators, whose mission is to destroy rather than to build up, cannot make headway among persons imbued with an intelligent understanding of the history and purposes of the United States. It is among this ignorant and unassimilated class that Bolshevism makes progress."

The other illustration is a quotation from the last public statement of the late Colonel Roosevelt. It was read at a public gathering under the auspices of the American Defense Society because the author was too ill to be present in person. I vie with any in my admiration for Mr. Roosevelt. He sets forth clearly the duty of treating all aliens on a basis of equality and protests against any discrimination against the immigrant because of creed or birthplace. Then follows these words:

"If he tries to keep segregated with men of his own origin and separated from the rest of America, then he is not doing his part as an American."

These statements at first blush seem sound and sensible, though I wish that between the lines I could have detected more clearly the sympathetic spirit, the patient persevering purpose and the note of human brotherhood.

The chief out about these two statements is that the inferences are not justified by a broad induction of facts and the individual and excep-

tional cases are suggested as being emphatic and prevailing. This will come up for fuller treatment later, but in passing let me say that in a way it suggests a "*sub jugum*" process—a round up of the non-naturalized foreigners by national police.

It is the launching of an every-alien drive. It assumes that the Yankee born is American *per se* and par excellence. It seems likely that many commonwealths are going to adopt Americanization departments, lacking uniformity of methods, conceited and jealous of states rights, and the foreigner when persecuted in one city may flee to another.

Already in some large industrial communities, some well-intentioned but hardly far-discerning persons are getting up some patronizing pink-tea sort of entertainments and putting out the sign, "Foreigners Welcome," as an aid to Americanization. In vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird.

A day or two since I saw a letter from a woman of social position, wife of a prominent professional man, a graduate of one of our distinguished woman's colleges, in which she gleefully announced that she was to act as chaperone at an assembly of mixed alien and American constituency arranged for the object of Americanization. She looked forward to her experience with the same zest she would have for "slumming." I assert without qualification that "after the ball is over," she will be "not at home" if one of the foreigners calls upon her, will look far from pleasant if she should find one in her pew at church some Sunday morning, and if she meets one on the street, believe me, she will have an attack of momentary myopia.

This sort of artificial, forced, hot-house method of amalgamation will turn out a few snobs and an equal number of sycophants, but not a single genuine American.

Is there any clear, complete un-



derstanding of what an American is or should be? Who can give a complete, concise definition of the same? I conducted a verbal questionnaire, and I give you some of the results. The most prevalent idea as to what an American consisteth of is a person born in the United States of a long line of Anglo-Saxon ancestry—geographical and racial, simply this and nothing more. Others add ability to read and write in the English tongue—educational. Others affirm that the earmarks of an American is one who always votes the straight regular Republican ticket, at least spurns socialism—political. Some say a simon-pure American must be a Protestant, and special grace requires a Congregationalist—ecclesiastical.

Somehow there is something incongruous in this free and independent America in finding people lending subserviency of intellect and conscience to a sole and single individual residing in self-imposed and secluded retirement in Italy. Still we do not feel that we are justified in starting a Protestant St. Bartholomew Massacre.

Some captains of industry claim that Americans bearing the hallmark are such as will work ten hours a day, not strike, and abhor labor unions.

Standard of living is sometimes made a norm. It is anti-American to dwell in slums or congested districts, do dirty work and beget a raft of children. Let the alien become American and reside on the airy, spacious avenues, or do desk work and dwell in apartments and have only one child at the outside. There is such truth in this irony that it is tragedy.

But leaving aside this characterization, which is much more than mere quibble, I ask myself if there is some strong, simple statement of what "Americanism" really is. If we can get this *pou sto*, we can possibly get some idea as to the purpose and process of Americanization.

God of old (i. e. one hundred forty

and three years ago) spoke unto the fathers in these words:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

That is Americanism, whole Americanism and nothing but Americanism.

Here we stand on holy ground.

From this same inspired (I abate not the word) document we learn the art of "Americanization." "And for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our *lives*, our *fortunes* and our *sacred honor*." Who can endure the searching glare of this White Throne?

This sets forth a national spirit which combines service and reverence. *It predicts a national consciousness which owns obligations* and a willingness to put something into politics instead of getting something out of politics.

The hardest chore I fear will be to Americanize our native Americans. The average native American is provincial, self-interested, conceited as to his race, caste, and chronically conservative as to any change affecting his established business, his personal comfort or social position, ignorant of the immigrant and assumes he is a patriot if he is successful in business. He defines Americanism as nativism.

The common cry is, and Mr. Roosevelt shared in its echo, that the immigrant wishes to live apart in insulated districts and deliberately and diabolically desires a low standard of living. Absolutely false. The alien lives in the slums only because of the economic necessity or social pressure. Almost daily I hear the wail of the Yankee that the foreign-



ers are coming into the street or neighborhood or on the adjoining farms. Rarely do I detect the tone of delight that the foreigners "are rising." The evolution of any city reveals the retreat of the native stock full of resentment. The alleged American keeps moving, finding refuge in restricted districts and **laying up** on all sides of his property holdings so as to protect himself from these foreigners. He takes his children out of the public schools and places them in private institutions, paying for the privilege of keeping them separate from the offspring of aliens. These persons, forsooth, are the ones who clamorously claim that they are one hundred per cent plus American, and charge the foreigner with the deep and fond desire of flocking by himself in congested squalor.

The average alleged American yearns for the Americanization of the alien apart from any association with him which method is, after all, the only one genuinely vital and valuable. He would cure alienism purely by absent treatment. We are all sinners together.

The street on which I reside is by no means fashionable, but it is respectable. Six ministers representing the same number of denominations abide thereon. A few years since a family moved in not many doors from my own. The numerous progeny proved it to be other than American and the speech of the parents revealed broken English. In short, the race was Italian, and the calling was that of the tailor.

Did we American Christians extend the glad hand? Did we feel any anxiety lest the family feel lonesome? Rather we frothed and fumed with feelings of a different sort. We declared a boycott, business-wise. Our children were warned to keep away lest they "catch something." But in spite of pride and prejudice on our part the family has won its place as being interesting, industrious and eminently respectable. The

children behave so well that they are a reproach to the results of some of us American parents. Even sociability beyond that of street greeting has ensued. Christmas season greetings take on substantial form and are reciprocal. Fruits of the garden furnish pleasure to native palates, and if I wanted a personal favor, the first and surest neighbor I would go to on the street would be this alien from sunny southern Italy. The family has been transformed in dress and demeanor. We have done a good job in Americanization in spite of ourselves. The irony of the situation is that recently the father came to me with the message that he feared he must move away because some American youth farther down the street were ill-treating and having a bad influence over his children. It was the unvarnished truth we are sorry to be obliged to say.

Talk about the foreigner living apart is absurd if made as a sweeping generality. Of course you can find isolated exceptions. As I walk down mornings to the Congregational House, a son of the Pilgrims not able to afford a Ford, there rolls by a luxurious limousine, having departed from a residence on fashionable, financial Farmington Avenue. The owner and occupant came here within the memory of the not oldest inhabitant, with his wife wearing a blue Italian shawl over her head. Within a month I saw that the son had been taken in to the select senior society of one of our important New England colleges. Did you ever know a millionaire remaining as a resident of the Ghetto?

Many, if not most, alleged Americans have taken smug satisfaction or senseless alarm during the recent years in attributing radical votes and platforms to the foreign-born. The Governor of Connecticut so assumed in his last inaugural which I read. Figures do not always lie and a few taken from the presidential vote of 1912 tell a different story.

Ohio has about one half the total



population of New York; also its foreign-born population, rated by percentage, is about one half that of New York. Yet Ohio cast 27,000 more votes for the Socialist candidate than the Empire State. Kansas, on the percentage basis of foreign-born, gave twice the Socialist vote of New York, while Oklahoma, one of the highest native-born populated states, ninety-seven and six-tenths, led all others in percentage of Socialist vote, being four times the ratio for New York, twice the ratio for Illinois and two and one half times that of Pennsylvania. I see no way that either higher or lower criticism can change this overwhelming refutation of imputation of fanatical foreign radicalism.

You have a right to require some brass-tackery in my treatment of this subject.

#### Governmental

Naturalization should impose more emphatic mental and moral attainment. The Federal Government should establish bureaus of instruction uniformly and adequately equipped and manned. If left to the sovereign states we will have good, bad and indifferent instruction or none at all. Privileges of naturalization should be absolutely and identically equal in all states. Why we failed to have the national unity we desire is that we have been making New York citizens and Nebraska citizens and not American citizens. Certain states of the Union allow immigrants to vote upon their first papers. In 1912 ten states gave this privilege. This is an avenue for dishonesty, debauchery, fraud and grafting.

In Nebraska, the alien in order to vote only has to live in the state six months and make his declaration thirty days before election. In short, an unspeakable Turk, who landed at Ellis Island in April, 1912, and took train at once for Nebraska, remaining a resident six months, and making his declaration in October, could

have voted at the coming presidential election without knowing a word of English, understanding a provision of the Constitution or being able to tell the name of any one of the political parties that had candidates in the field.

If, however, mental and moral requirements should be more rigid, the method and mechanism of naturalization should be simpler and more economical. Declaration and first papers should be interchangeable between states, or better yet, be under uniform Federal control.

Alien privileges and prohibitions should be uniform and reasonable throughout the nation instead of being left to the whim and wickedness of individual states.

A few years ago California was short of school teachers and called on Canada to come over and help, when it was found that they could not be paid their just wage from the funds of the state as there was a constitutional prohibition of the commonwealth against aliens.

It is expected that the immigrant shall be industrious to show himself worthy of naturalization and then the several states restrict him in occupation, and it reaches its climax in Michigan where no alien can be a barber. The ban is also put on recreation as well as occupation, and the Keystone State, previously, if not now, decides that no alien may own a dog.

Foreign language newspapers with 9,000,000 readers should be inspected by Government officials, not only to spy out treasonable utterances or anti-American sentiments, but to correct un-American ideas and ideals; and a strong and sympathetic series of instructive and inspirational articles along the line of American intelligence and ideals in the way of plate matter should be freely inserted on the pages of the foreign language press.

I am a good deal of a States Right man as becometh a good Con-



necticutian, but the political and didactic means and methods for naturalization, the broad highway into Americanism, should be solely the duty and task of the Federal Government.

### Social

Now the second means and method for inducing satisfactory Americanism is social. This is, after all, the most vital and valuable instrument. This is a method that is slow and difficult, not to understand but to secure. Racial, intellectual and financial conditions make caste cleavages as wide as the abyss between Abraham's bosom and the dry and thirsty land where no water is, known as the final abode of one Mr. Dives. On previous occasions I have said something about brotherhood as the basis of democracy that has found its way into print, and I do not intend to repeat.

In the excerpt from the recent inaugural message of the Governor of Connecticut which I read, were these words, following his notice of the large percentage of claim for exemption from military service on the part of the alien: "That he is capable of absorption is obvious to anyone who glances over the casualty list and notes the foreign extraction of many of our finest citizen soldiers."

The question is, "Why did he make a fine soldier?" Because he was forced to it? You do not beget bravery with a bludgeon. Loyalty is not an effect of the lash. I will tell you why he made good in the army. He felt sure he was getting a square deal. He was treated as a fellow man and he measured up to it. He started out first, stripped to the skin, the bare body of a man, just like the rest. He marched and messed and bunked and bivouacked on equal terms and conditions with every other. Race and religion made no discrimination nor invidious distinction. Given a square deal he proved a square man. This must be the method, not only in war but in

peace and in the hearts of our countrymen. Americanization will come like an avalanche if the square deal in industrial, political, social and religious life is assured.

In giving Mrs. Woodrow Wilson a shoulder patch of the Seventy-seventh Division, General Alexander said:

"I am proud of my division. It came from New York City and has in it every race—Poles, Jews, Italians, and even Germans. If you go to the Argonne Forest and see its graves and read the names on them, you will see that every race is there, but they are all Americans."

Finally, this high and holy idealism set forth by the fathers a century and a half ago, must be organized into civil life, find its expression in social life and be interpreted in religious life.

The pillar of cloud and fire must be pointed out by Christian leaders and teachers and Christians must follow the gleam. The pure in heart will behold the vision whereby the people will not perish. God forbid that they become disobedient to the heavenly portent.

American spells obligation as well as opportunity, and there is no Americanization without its assumption.

What agency can so interpret this idealism that it can be seen coming down out of heaven? The Christian Church. Perhaps home missions here has its greatest chance of coming to its own and having satisfaction for its genuine travail of soul.

Would it not be well to have in every creed in America, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."



Then let us require not a nominal assent to this creed but its thoroughgoing application. So much for the creed. What about the covenant?

“And for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we

mutually pledge to each other, our Lives, our Fortunes, and our Sacred Honor.” Thus do I covenant.

Then there will be no need to say, “Lo, here, or lo, there,” for the Kingdom of God is at hand and within you.



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